

Conference Abstract

Jar-by-Jar: Curation Improvements to the Herpetology Collection at CUMNH

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Abstract

The University of Colorado Museum of Natural History (CUMNH) Herpetology Collection is comprised of over 65,000 fluid-preserved specimens representing over 2,500 taxa from more than 70 countries. Despite its active use, a history of irregular topping up schedules and a decades-long dearth in rehousing projects due to budgetary constraints left the collection in substandard conditions. A 2015 survey of roughly 10% of the collection revealed average ethanol concentrations far below desired levels, with only 15% of specimen jars surveyed containing optimal preservative strengths of 70% (+/- 2.5%). In Fall 2017, CUMNH secured an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grant to holistically address shortcomings in the micro- and macro-storage environments within the Herpetology Collection. Program activities include jar-by-jar ethanol remediation using a digital density meter and a topping up algorithm proposed by Notton 2010, collection-wide replacement of faulty jars and lids, and installation of new static and mobile compactor shelving. Updates to nomenclature and a full specimen inventory including condition and location tracking in Arctos also fall within the project scope. This talk will cover progress thus far, our approaches to moving a collection in place, and systematic remedial topping up as a valuable counterpart to routine monitoring in fluid collections.

Keywords

Herpetology, Fluid Collections, Curation, Topping Up, IMLS

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